



**Issue 48 (2007)**  
**November 23-29, 2007**

**Part 1: News Analysis**

This week Turkmenistan marked the fifth anniversary of the attempted overthrow of long-time dictator Saparmurat Niyazov, who ruled the country for over twenty years. The country's new president, who can use his complete control of the media to his political advantage, marked the watershed event by ignoring it. Instead public attention was deflected by the announced hike in gas prices to Russia and by enforced celebrations of the dual holidays of Harvest Day and Good Neighborliness Day.

To outside observers today viewing Turkmenistan's dramatically improved foreign relations, promising position on increased energy revenues, and presidential-level assurances of higher living standards and improved rights protections domestically, the Turkmenistan of five years ago may seem part of a distant past. On November 25, 2002, dozens of people in Turkmenistan were arrested for alleged involvement in an armed attack on President Niyazov's motorcade that left the president unharmed but triggered dozens of arrests along with televised show trials and a broad crackdown on society and foreigners that endured until his death almost one year ago.

By presidential order, some of the lesser alleged coup plotters were released in October. As the Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights (TIHR) noted in a commemorative statement this week, the prosecutor general who conducted the criminal case at that time, the ministers of national security and interior affairs and the chairman of the Supreme Court have all since been dismissed. But the cellmates of TIHR's director, Farid Tukhbatullin, remain behind bars and in complete isolation: Dovlet Gaipov was given 20 years of imprisonment, Akmurad Kabulov – 8, and Yazgeldy Gundogdyev – 25, and Yklym Yklymov -- life imprisonment.

Following the November 27 meeting between President Berdymukhamedov and the CEO of Russia's Gazprom, an agreement was announced for Russia to boost natural gas imports and accelerate the construction of the Caspian-shore Gas Pipeline. Russia also approved an increase of up to 50 percent for Turkmen gas, to US \$130/1,000 cm for the first half of 2008, and \$150/1,000 cm for the second half, after which market prices will be set. The decision may have played a role in this week's announced postponement of negotiations, previously planned for late November, on the \$4 billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline (TAPI).

The Turkmen government continued to keep open all its options, juggling meetings this week from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Islamic Development Bank, which has expressed an interest in building on past partnership to expand participation in projects for health, education, and road construction.

## Part 2: News Digest

Summary: Turkmenistan bargained successfully with Russia to raise its gas prices by nearly 50 percent for 2008. November 25 marked the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attempted overthrow of long-time dictator Saparmurat Niyazov, but President Berdymukhamedov disappointed those who hoped he would break more decisively with the past, distracting attention with celebration of national harvest and hospitality holidays and failing to release any more political prisoners arrested at the time.

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## 1. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### a. TAPI Gas Pipeline Projects Runs Into Trouble

**Source:** *Business Standard/business-standard-com/11/29/07. Synopsis prepared by OSI Turkmenistan Project.*

**Full version:** [http://www.business-standard.com/common/storypage\\_c\\_online.php?leftnm=11&bKeyFlag=IN&autono=30672](http://www.business-standard.com/common/storypage_c_online.php?leftnm=11&bKeyFlag=IN&autono=30672)

**Synopsis:** Following Gazprom's confirmation of an agreement to pay Turkmenistan next year nearly 50 percent more than current prices for its gas, prospects for a \$4 billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline are in doubt, business-standard.com of New Delhi reported. Negotiations originally planned to be held in Islamabad among the countries involved have been postponed.

Given Russia's new costs for Turkmenistan's gas, the pipeline is unlikely to materialize even in the next decade, business-standard.com reported a senior official in the petroleum industry as saying. "There are also contracts with China, besides Europe. It is unlikely that there will be enough gas to pump into Afghanistan, Pakistan and India," the official was quoted as saying. Officially, India says the pipeline is still under consideration, business-standard.com reported.

### b. Turkmenistan Hosts UN-backed Regional Seminar for Civil Servants

**Source:** *BBC Monitoring-Central Asia/TV Altyn Asyr/11/21/07.*

[Presenter] A regional seminar entitled "Leadership, morality, accountability and professionalism in the state sector" began its work in the Turkmen capital [Ashgabat] November 21. High-level representatives from the administrative bodies of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are taking part in the seminar held under the aegis of the UN.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance of Turkmenistan, on behalf of the country's government, jointly with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA] and the UN Development Programme organized the international forum.

Experts from the UN and the Association of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe (NISPACee) and consultants from several countries are attending the meeting which is being held in the conference hall of the State Tax Committee.

[Passage omitted: participants noted the significance of the current seminar and reforms in Turkmenistan aimed at improving state bodies]

Speaking about the need to reform the state sector with the aim of achieving sustainable economic growth and improving the authorities' performance, participants particularly stressed the importance of taking into account regional and national peculiarities, which largely define approaches to forming administrative bodies. Participants in the seminar came to a common opinion that ethics at all management levels were the main condition for effective management. First of all, this envisages integrity, professionalism and accountability of civil servants, the qualities which directly define the level of trust of the country's citizens to the government.

[Passage omitted on exchange of experiences with other countries.]

## 2. DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

### a. November 25 Anniversary of Failed Coup in Turkmenistan

**Original title:** *A Day in November.*

**Source:** *Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights/11/25/07*

**Full version:** <http://www.chrono-tm.org/?02660435770000000000000011000000>

[Article by Farid Tukhbatullin] Whether we want it to or not, November 25th has gone down in the history of Turkmenistan. On this day, five years ago, an assassination attempt against the President of the country, Saparmurat Niyazov took place as was stated by the Turkmen authorities. This was followed by dozens of people being arrested across the country and receiving lengthy terms of imprisonment. Five persons were sentenced to death. A wave of repression hit hundreds of families. I happened to share a prison cell with some of these people. They were educated and well aware of what would happen to them. After the announced verdicts they had no illusions that Niyazov would ever pardon even those who received relatively mild sentences. This was particularly evident in the light of the fact that in addition to the unjustified long terms of imprisonment, all of them were declared "betrayers of the motherland," so they were not covered by any actions of pardon.

Yet, they always placed hope in a review of their criminal cases. They were confident that regardless of the bias of the judicial system and the hysteria that reigned in the country, if the judges followed the criminal code and not the terms and detention conditions personally determined by Niyazov, many of those arrested could get off with minimal terms of imprisonment.

Niyazov has gone. Ms. Atajanova, the Prosecutor General who conducted the criminal case involving the assassination attempt is serving her second year in prison. The ministers who used to head the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at that time and directed the investigation of this criminal case have been dismissed. So was the chairman of the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the present President of the country pledged to follow Niyazov's policies. Yet, on the other hand, he has created the image of a reformer and even a bit of a democrat in the eyes of Turkmen citizens and the international community. Whoever Berdymukhamedov presents himself as, he will have to deal with the issue of the «betrayers of the motherland». He is urged to do so by many states and international organizations.

How is the President going to solve this problem? He might pardon these people or, at least, some of them. He might take this case more seriously and announce the review of the cases of the «betrayers of the motherland». If Berdymukhamedov decides to take this step, this will be regarded as a true and strong move toward the democratization of the country by the international community. It is of little importance for the prisoners by what means they will be freed or, at least, receive a chance to get in contact with their families (currently they are deprived of the right of correspondence). They are desperate for justice. Despite the fact that they are called "betrayers of the motherland" and criminals, they are, above all, human beings. And they also fall under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I am not aware of what happened to my cellmates. Yklym Yklymov was sentenced to death, Dovlet Gaipov to 20 years imprisonment, Yazgeldy Gundogdyev – to 25 years, Akmurad Kabulov – to 8 years. I can only hope that they are safe and healthy; or as healthy as one can be during five years imprisonment in a strict-regime Turkmen prison in absolute isolation.

## **b. Five Years Later, Political Prisoners Arrested in Failed Coup Still Not Released**

**Original title:** *Political Prisoners Next Test for Turkmen President*

**Source:** Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty/11/27/07. Copyright (c) 2007. RFE/RL, Inc. Reprinted with the permission of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1201 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Washington DC 20036. Excerpted by OSI Turkmenistan Project

**Full version:** <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/11/66dc9f0e-9322-49be-8359-74302d18e214.html>

**Excerpt:** [Passages omitted on background to alleged fail coup November 25, 2007 and President Berdymukhamedov's reforms and amnesty of some prisoners.]

Now, on the anniversary of that event, Berdymukhamedov's agenda faces a new test: Will it stall here, or will he push the envelope further by showing clemency to many of those imprisoned under dubious circumstances five years ago?

"Of course I wish it could be so, but I have to say everything is like it was before [under President Niyazov]," said Tatyana Shikhmuradova, whose husband, former Foreign Minister Boris Shikhmuradov, is serving a life sentence for organizing the assassination bid. "The new leadership views my appeals and those of other relatives [of people imprisoned] the same way the previous regime did."

Besides Shikhmuradov, scores of others were also arrested, many for nothing more than being related to the crime's alleged leaders. They were sentenced at secret or show trials that drew numerous complaints from international-rights organizations.

[Passages omitted on past president Saparmurat Niyazov's account of the alleged coup and his cult of personality.]

It didn't take Turkmen authorities long to come up with a list of suspects. Within hours of the reported assassination attempt, Niyazov named those he was holding responsible. "[Those who carried out the assassination attempt] were hired, given weapons, and sent to carry out the shooting," the president said on television. "They got high (took drugs) and tried to carry out their orders. Punishment will be brought to them. But they are not the ones who bear the main responsibility. There are others who stand behind them -- Shikhmuradov, Khanamov, Orazov, and Yklymov. They won't go far and will one day come into my grasp."

Besides Shikhmuradov, Niyazov was referring to former Deputy Agriculture Minister Sapar Yklymov, former Deputy Prime Minister and central bank chief Khudaiberdy Orazov and former Ambassador to Turkey Nurmukhammed Khanamov. All of them were believed to have been outside of the country for months or even years. Yklymov, who was living in Sweden at the time, spoke to RFE/RL's Turkmen Service and described the crackdown that was just starting. "My relatives have all been arrested -- women, girls, children," he said. "It is a disgrace that Niyazov is fighting with women, girls, and children."

It was the same with the other people Niyazov named. The alleged masterminds may have been outside the country but many of their relatives were still in Turkmenistan and it was against them that Niyazov's wrath was directed.

Shikhmuradov was eventually apprehended in late December inside Turkmenistan, which at least partially vindicated Turkmen authorities who had even searched for him in Uzbekistan's embassy in Ashgabat in defiance of international law. Before the end of 2002, Shikhmuradov was convicted at a secret trial that lasted a few hours. He was later put on state television -- in what appeared to be a drugged state -- where he made a full confession and begged Niyazov for mercy.

Officially about 100 people were arrested, but there are claims that the number was far higher. Since some of the opposition leaders accused of involvement lived in exile in Russia, Niyazov called for canceling the dual-citizenship agreement between Turkmenistan and Russia. Niyazov ordered the Uzbek ambassador to leave the country after Turkmen authorities accused Tashkent of helping Shikhmuradov to enter Turkmenistan and hiding him at the ambassador's residence after the assassination attempt. The Turkmen government also ordered ethnic Uzbeks living near the border with Uzbekistan to be relocated.

[Passage omitted on inclusion of 11 persons accused of involvement in the assassination in the October 2007 amnesty, and expectation that more concessions would follow.]

"They could make some kind of gesture to the West by allowing [the prisoners to have] visits, or that those who were directly or indirectly involved in those events, regardless of whether the accusations against them are fair or not, they would be freed," said Vitaly Ponomarev of the Moscow-based rights group Memorial. So far, there is no indication that people like Shikhmuradov will be released.

[Passage omitted on Berdymukhamedov's social reforms but failure to denounce Niyazov's policies, and opportunity to do so if remaining prisoners are released.].

### **c. Dual Holiday Celebration in Turkmenistan**

**Original title:** *President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov Congratulates the People of Turkmenistan on Good Neighborliness Day and Harvest Holiday.*

**Source:** Official Turkmen Government Website/11/25/07. Translated by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

**Full version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=071125b>

[Official address from the President]

The holidays are rooted in ancient times, they reflect the people's national traditions. It is deeply symbolic that we celebrate two holidays on the same day – Good Neighborliness Day and Harvest Holiday. Harvest Holiday is a display of joy in the results of labor, of a harvest grown by the sweat of one's brow, a display of pride in our native land, the breadbasket, in the wellbeing and prosperity it provides. From ancient times, the Turkmen follow a tradition: with everything grown in one's own garden or vegetable plot, made at home or baked in a tamdyr, the most delicious things are first offered to neighbors, and this tradition was called gonshokara. The Turkmen's humaneness, their desire to live in peace and concord with the neighbors, in friendship with them, are reflected in this remarkable holiday. Rejoicing at a new harvest and knowing its value, Turkmen have always held bread in deep respect. A Turkmen will never betray people once he has eaten bread at their home. Gonshokara unites and brings people together, makes them more kind, sincere.

The fundamental reforms we have started in many sectors, intensified with more success, enable us to celebrate our national holidays widely, solemnly and with inspiration. The XX Halk Maslakhaty attached significant importance to development of the agricultural sector and rural areas, and made the important decisions. They have given results.

Turkmenistan pays profound attention to the expansion of mutually advantageous co-operation with world powers. In this way, our friendly relations with neighboring countries are strengthened and raised to a higher level. The national traditions of good neighborliness are considered a priority of national policy, and it becomes apparent in the close and friendly relations with neighboring countries. It further enhances the international prestige of our state – a peace-maker endeavoring to ensure the tranquil and stable life for the peoples in the region and all over the world -- and activates the key factors of intensifying and strengthening mutually advantageous co-operation with neighbours.

Numerous examples of the Turkmen's original qualities of character such as diligence, courage, endurance, respect for neighbours and aspiration for friendship are regarded worldwide as the national policy and the lofty purport of existence of the independent country.

#### **d. Unregistered Prayer Violates Religion Law: Turkmen Government**

**Original title:** Turkmenistan: "Prayer Without State Registration Violates the Religion Law"

**Source:** Forum 18 News Service/11/21/07. Synopsis by Forum 18 News Service.

**Full version:** [http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article\\_id=1050](http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1050)

**Synopsis:** Baptist pastor Vyacheslav Kalatayevsky has been warned not to meet for worship with his fellow believers, Forum 18 News Service reported. "Officials summoned me for what they said was a conversation, but at the end presented me with a pre-written statement saying that I agreed not to meet with my fellow-believers," Forum 18 quoted him as saying. Although Kalatayevsky's congregation does not oppose state registration on principle, officials kept telling him that his congregation does not have enough adult citizen members to apply for registration. They added that unregistered religious activity, including people meeting together for worship in homes, is banned.

"I asked them to show me what part of the law bans unregistered worship and they were unable to do so," Kalataevsky told Forum 18. Throughout Turkmenistan this autumn, Protestants, Muslims and people from other faiths have been stopped from exercising their right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief.

#### **e. Workers Stage Sit-Down Strike Near Ashgabat**

**Source:** Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights/www.chrono-org.tm/11/26/07, Translated by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

**Full version:** <http://www.chrono-tm.org/?02510435840000000000000011000000>.

**Excerpts:** About one hundred workers involved in reopening a steel and iron factory outside Ashgabat refused to go to work in early November, the Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights reported. They staged the action in protest against non-payment of wages for the last two months. The factory is being constructed by Sehil, a Turkish firm. According to the president's wishes, no less than 70 percent of the worker in all foreign companies working in Turkmenistan must be residents.



The foreign bosses are pleased with the situation, say many workers, "because we come cheap, we are paid US \$100 dollars, and the foreign workers are paid a little more. But Turkmen are happy to work for \$100 since there is a great deal of unemployment in the country."

"If we had been given our wages on time, we wouldn't have thought to strike," workers said. "We were forced to stage a sit-down strike in order to get our wages," they explained. "It's not easy to live far away from our families, in rented space, often without the most elementary conveniences. But we don't have a choice," a builder from Mary commented. The strike was successful, as the workers were given their wages.

## **f. New Airport Terminal to be Built on Turkmenistan Border with Iran and Afghanistan**

*Original title:* Turkmen Border Town to Get New Airport Terminal Soon

*Source:* FBIS/Turkmen TV Altyn Asyr/11/28/07

Another beautiful building will decorate the architectural look of the town of Mary [in southern Turkmenistan, on the border with Iran and Afghanistan]. The finishing touches are being put on a two-storey airport terminal, and the power supply lines to it are also being laid rapidly. The building, designed to meet international standards, is being jointly constructed by Turkmen and Turkish construction teams.

Once put into operation, the terminal with a service capacity of some 300 passengers per hour will help to raise the quality of service for air travellers.

## **3. ECONOMIC NEWS**

### **a. Russia Agrees to Pay Turkmenistan Some 50% More for Gas**

*Original title:* Turkmenistan Gas Price Rises 50 Percent. Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

*Source:* BBC News/11/29/07

*Full version:* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7116218.stm>

Synopsis: Russia has agreed to pay Turkmenistan up to 50 percent more for its gas, the BBC reported today, citing Russia's Gazprom. Gazprom buys almost all the gas exported by Turkmenistan and sells it to other countries. The price hike will also help Turkmenistan speed up construction of a new Caspian Sea pipeline. The state-run Gazprom currently supplies 25 percent of European's gas needs, and had been paying \$100 per 1,000 cm for gas before the price hike.

### **b. Turkmen Leader Meets With Gazprom CEO**

*Original title:* President of Turkmenistan Receives Chairman of Board of Gazprom. Excerpt by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

*Source:* Official Turkmen Government Website/11/27/07

*Full version:* <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=071128c>

The president of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov received Gazprom CEO Alexey Miller.

[Passage omitted on current cooperation and opportunities for the future.]

Focusing on implementation of the long-term agreement on Turkmen gas deliveries to Russia, the Russian partners reaffirmed the readiness to increase Turkmen natural gas imports. Touching upon the implementation of the projects on construction the Caspian pipeline and modernization of the interstate gas transport systems, the Turkmen leader and the Gazprom CEO expressed a reciprocal willingness to accelerate the Caspian gas pipeline project and agreed to launch the project by the beginning of 2008.

The interlocutors reached an agreement on the issues related to price policy. Taking into account the current state of the world energy market the partners, specified the terms of the gas purchase agreement for the year 2008.

[Passage omitted on reaffirmation of interest and hopes for cooperation.]

### **c. Gazprom CEO Says EU, US Urged Turkmenistan to Raise Prices**

**Source:** *Interfax/11/23/07. Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project.*

**Full version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=071128a>

**Synopsis:** Turkmen officials told visiting Gazprom executives that their purchase price for gas could increase by at least 30 percent in 2008, Alexei Miller, CEO of Gazprom, told reporters November 23 in Ashgabat. As Russia and Turkmenistan are "natural strategic partners in the energy area," the expectation is that the relationship will continue, Interfax quoted Miller as saying. "We discussed long-range prospects for the development of our partnership relations, as well as plans for the near future," he said.

Miller added that Turkmen colleagues told him that the European Commission and the U.S. administration had told Turkmen officials that their current gas export prices are too low, given the current price in Europe. "It is not a surprise that Turkmen colleagues raised the issue that it is necessary to increase the purchase price at least 30% in 2008," Miller said.

### **d. Turkmenistan to Raise Gas Price for Russia**

**Original title:** *Turkmen to Sell Natural Gas at New Price. Synopsis prepared by OSI Turkmenistan Project.*

**Source:** *turkmenistan.ru/11/28/07.*

**Full version:** [http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page\\_id=3&lang\\_id=en&elem\\_id=11701&type=event&sort=date\\_desc](http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=11701&type=event&sort=date_desc)

**Synopsis:** President Berdymukhamedov told a cabinet meeting November 28 that Russia and Turkmenistan have agreed that the price of Turkmenistan's gas will rise to US \$130 per cm for Russia in the first half of 2008 and then to US \$150 in the latter half of 2008, turkmenistan.ru reported. Turkmenistan was guided primarily by its national interests in proposing new conditions for the partnership with Russia.

"The rise in prices for Turkmen natural gas is not the ultimate goal, but an unbiased calculation based on the existing reality which, in turn, requires a balanced approach to developing the partnership further based on the principles of equality and mutual respect for each other's interests," the head of state said.

Russia was also informed that Turkmenistan was to set gas rates based on market prices starting in 2009.

### **e. EBRD Delegation Visits Turkmenistan**

**Source:** *Official Turkmen Government Website/State News Agency (TDH)/11/27/07.*

**Full version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=071128a>

A delegation of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development led by Business Group Director for South Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus Olivier Descamps is visiting Turkmenistan.

The guests will be received at the Government of Turkmenistan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They will hold meetings and talks with high-ranking officials of ministries and federal departments including the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Textile Industry, and the state banks [are there more than one?] of Turkmenistan.

The members of the EBRD delegation conducted talks at the Turkmen National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan and the State Institute for Statistics.



## **g. Islamic Development Bank to Fund Projects in Turkmenistan**

**Original title:** Islamic Development Bank Wishes to Fund Turkmen Projects – TV

**Source:** BBC Monitoring--Central Asia/Turkmen TV Altyn Asyr/11/24/07

A delegation of the Islamic Development Bank [IDB], headed by the vice-president of the bank, Dr Amadou Boubacar Cisse, was on a visit in Asgabat this week. [Passage omitted: the delegation was received at the Turkmen government and at ministries and departments]

During meetings and talks, the sides expressed satisfaction with the present level of partnership and exchanged views on the ways of expanding mutually beneficial partnership, in particular in financing new projects and programmes intended to boost Turkmenistan's socio-economic development.

The Islamic Development Bank, having shown an interest in expanding and strengthening traditional partnership with Turkmenistan, has reaffirmed its readiness to participate in projects currently being implemented in important sectors such as healthcare, education, roads construction and others.

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*Unless otherwise indicated, all translations have been prepared by OSI's Turkmenistan Project.*

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